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Discrepant Parallels. Cultural Implications of the Canada-US Border is a succinct mapping of the central role of the 49th parallel in giving form to a distinctly Canadian identity, as well as a powerful display of how Border Studies and notions of the hemispheric are reshaping (North) American Studies. Through various examples drawn from Canadian literature and television, Gillian Roberts traces constructions of Canadianness arising out of its self-distancing from the United States as well as its settler-colonial racialization of non-Whites as non-Canadian others. To do this, Roberts limits her material to the time period between the 1980s and 2015, which saw not only the repatriation of the Canadian constitution (1982), the

adoption of the Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988), the Oka Crisis (1990) and the second Québec sovereignty referendum (1995), but also the signing of a bilateral Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between Canada and the USA in 1989, of NAFTA in 1994 and 9/11, the latter three being fundamental events concerning the administration and fortification of the Canada-US border as well as the institutionalization of Canada's involvement with the American hemisphere beyond the United States.

6 The key in Roberts's analysis of the 49th parallel's cultural implications is the concept of hospitality and, in drawing from Jacques Derrida, hostipitality and the deconstruction of its function as a founding myth of Canadian identity. Hospitality, Roberts argues with Derrida, is the invitation to make oneself at home, but only to a degree that does not threaten the sovereignty of the host that is ultimately the foundation of their ability to be hospitable and offer their home to the guest. "To infringe on the host's power is to turn hospitality into hostility (…)", Roberts notes, which is why "the bestowing of hospitality in itself actually *withholds* hospitality through the reassertion of the host's power" (10). It is this tension between being a host, potentially having that ability denied by one's guest and the hostility required to reassert one's status as host that is condensed into the concept of hostipitality that *Discrepant Parallels* traces in multiple re-iterations in Canadian cultural products.

7 One of the central questions arising out of this conceptual matrix is that of who can actually be a host? Reading David W. McFadden's *Great Lakes Suite*, Roberts shows how a hegemonic American neighbor and its citizens often deny the position of sovereign host to Canadians, even north of the 49th parallel. However, as a settler-colonial nation, Canada itself commits an even more hostile act in denying to First Nations the status of host on their own territory. This position of Canada as host is further complicated when considering how Canada's historical implications in slavery or imperial wars undermine its self-portrayals as host for the vulnerable from the Underground Railroad to Latin American refugees in the 1970s and 1980s. As Roberts points out in her introduction:

> 8 If Indigenous people are denied the host position usurped by Euro-North Americans, the figuring of Canadianness as whiteness places even the descendants of those who arrived in Canada via

> the Underground Railroad as perpetual guests according to a racist logic of who gets to belong to the nation. (15)

9 The border, then, is traced as differential principle in *Discrepant Parallels*, perceived by some as a border protecting Canada from a vulgar and threatening US neighbor, while literally cutting through and dismembering the territory and identity of others. Roberts notes that "the idea of the Canada-US border as a necessary buffer is particular to the Anglo-Canadian national imaginary" (13), and not shared by those within Canada to which it is those very same Anglo-Canadians that pose the biggest threat to cultural and political sovereignty.

10 *Discrepant Parallels* follows the structure of this argument by offering first a reading of Canadian civility by engaging the aforementioned *Great Lakes Suite* by David McFadden, as well as the televised border policing dramas *Bordertown, Due South* and *The Border,* and then undermining the border constructions they propose through close lectures of texts written from indigenous, African-Canadian and Latin-Canadian positions. While the deconstructions of McFadden's ironic travel literature and the television series' portrayal of a Canadian social order incarnated in the Mountie or good cop serve to delineate positive constructions of Canadianness based on distinguishing it from (white) Americanness, the core of the book's argument is to be found in the three chapters offering a critique of Canada's white settler-colonial nationalism and its sublimation into narratives of hospitality and civility. As an officially bi-lingual and multi-cultural nation, Canada strategically places Québec and its purportedly more humane treatment of First Nations and welcoming of fugitive slaves and refugees from Latin America as central markers of its national identity and difference to the United States, along such achievements as universal health care. In her reading of non-white Canadian authors, however, Roberts shows how these narratives rely on erasing from historical memory Canada's own involvement in the expropriation of native land as well as slavery and imperial warfare. Dedicating a chapter to each of these non-dominant perspectives, Roberts develops a critique of the Canadian self-mythologizing that informs works such as *Great Lake Suites* or the border policing dramas considered through a re-reading of the border as an

instance of exclusionary policing and racialization rather than inclusionary hospitality and civility.

11 This reading, however, does not reduce non-White Canadians to the position of victims. Roberts describes, for example, how "when encountering white Americans who pose some kind of physical threat, Indigenous characters strategically perform and insist upon Canadian identity, inserting the border as buffer between themselves and American aggressors" (112), as they do in Jeannette Armstrong's novel *Slash* when insisting on the protection offered by their Canadian passports during a police control south of the Canada-US border. Such a use of what Roberts calls, with Stuart Christie, the "deployment of 'plural sovereignties'" (120) however is to be seen as purely strategic and not a concession to Canadian constitutional discourse of any kind. Roberts's close readings of novels and plays by indigenous authors such as Armstrong, Drew Hayden Taylor or Thomas King insist repeatedly on the neo-colonial core of the Canadian model of multi-cultural citizenship, which implicitly asks indigenous people to recognize the legitimacy of the Canadian state by conceding it the power to offer such citizenship.

12 Such ambivalent relationships to the Canadian nation-state also mark the African-Canadian texts by Lawrence Hill and Djanet Sears that Gillian Roberts engages. While many of the authors conjure an African diasporic identity rather than an African-Canadian one, they also problematize narratives positing black immigration to Canada as recent. Erasing from historical memory the presence of black loyalists among the very early settlers of Canada not only serves to construct the settler-colonial state as white, but in so doing denies the host-position that African-Canadians can historically lay claim to just as much as white Canadians. The narrative of a welcoming hospitality that is activated maybe more than anywhere else in the celebration of Canada as a sanctuary for fugitive slaves, the terminal of the Underground railroad, is thus upset by both Canada's own historical involvement in slavery and its erasing of a constitutive black presence in its history as well as its continuing Othering of non-Whites as non-Canadian.

13 Similar re-readings of "the border as a site of policing racialized bodies rather than simply offering them sanctuary" (150) are necessary when considering the past and present of Latin American presences in Canada. As

opposed to the myth that celebrates the Canada-US border as the longest undefended border in the world, Roberts proposes to her reader texts that center on the policing of immigration at the border and throughout the American hemisphere, and show how that hemispheric Latin American presences are not a recent NAFTA related phenomenon in Canada but go back at least as far as the 1974 *Seasonal Agricultural Workers Programme* between Canada and Mexico. Again, Roberts shows how the border works to deny hospitality rather than offering it by tracing a continued invisibility of labor-migrants within both Canadian society and its imaginary. Whereas national mythology posits Canada as safe haven for Latin American refugees, novels such as Jeannette Turner Hospital's *Borderline* or Joan Macleod's *Amigo's Blue Guitar* show how Canada's hospitality is a form of tolerance rather than acceptance. As is repeatedly emphasized throughout *Discrepant Parallels,* "the much-touted virtue of 'tolerance' in Canada" (172) is in fact little more than an exoticizing consumption of cultural differences that remains active only as long as political differences do not manifest themselves (e.g. in form of claims for the return of indigenous land or critiques of white nationalism and the exploitation of the undocumented).

14 In collapsing the Canada-US border with the Mexico-US border to reframe Canada in a hemispheric context, Gillian Roberts also renders more precise the re-reading of American Studies as Hemispheric Studies and through Border Studies that is performed masterfully throughout *Discrepant Parallels*. The entire book is a close deconstruction of mythical self-ascriptions of hospitality and civility that serve to articulate a specific Canadian identity both nationally and internationally. But it is always also a demonstration of why the hemispheric and the border have become such central conceptual catalogues within American Studies. Reading from the 49th parallel, *Discrepant Parallels* does not stay put in the border regions, but mobilizes the border as an analytical framework that lays open the constitutional enweavement of the intensely local and national with the expansively international and hemispheric. Proceeding from nationalist constructions of the border as a differential instance that defines and defends Canadianness from the United States all the while remaining inclusive and hospitable to the vulnerable and miserable, to a critique of the racializing and exclusionary

nature of the settler-colonial Canadian nation state, *Discrepant Parallels* uncovers invisible presences of the border and its logic throughout Canadian culture and history. In so doing, the book offers more than the "critical borderlands practice" (24) it sets out to be. Roberts shows why Border Studies is not just a potential sub-field also at home in American Studies and why the hemispheric is not just an alternative model of American Studies, but that both are in fact core dimensions of the discipline. Hemispheric American Studies do not simply place North America in a hemispheric context, nor do they simply expand American Studies by decentering the hegemonic presence of the United States. Rather, they show why Canadianness (or Americanness or Mexicanness …) cannot be understood outside historical formations such as settler-colonialism or racialization that have always been and remain hemispheric and for whose analysis the border is central.

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